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To stir the emotions of his own world, his own race, is already a passport to immortality for an artist, and many have achieved it. It is true it is almost folly to expect an artist to produce a work that will, at one and the same time, stir the emotions of a Christian in New York and a Buddhist in Japan. But if he is very great, his work may be high and deep enough to stir the emotion of all races. Then he becomes one of the Heroes of art! The number of these is few indeed.

No one has ever made a valid argument to justify the pretention that an artist *must* be of his own epoch instead of belonging to all epochs. It is only a specious thought which, shuttlecocked about for years by modernistic excessivists, has become current and appeals to the petty commercial artists who love to startle the simple laymen or confound more serious artists with a pretentious slogan.

No man can entirely escape his own epoch, any more than Münchhausen could mount to the clouds by pulling at his own bootstraps. Unconscious imitation is for us so natural—for the young, a life-necessity and for the old a constant allurements—that only by the greatest effort can a man remain true to himself. Even the greatest men cannot entirely escape the awful pressure exerted on every man by the social atmosphere of his time. Michelangelo, with all his great effort to be original, is still essentially of the Renaissance epoch—even in his most universal and greatest productions. He falls short even of the universality of Pheidias.

Therefore to preach as an artistic doctrine, as a goal in art, that which is inevitable, to preach that doctrine with insolence, to hobble an artist with it—as many modernist “mandarins” of art do—is childish, all the more when the doctrine is utterly undesirable, seeing that to think even for a moment of the style and spirit of one’s epoch tends distinctly to stifle originality. It can even be said with truth that those works which bear the stamp of some narrow epochal style of the past are, because of that very stamp, distinctly inferior to such as do not really remind us of any particular epoch. So that the greatest works of the Greeks look as though they might have been done only yesterday. Now shrieking originality is not essential to the

making of a great work of art, and one truly beautiful work, however conventional, is worth a cargo of ugly creations, however original.

But for those whose vanity makes them yearn to be original, let them not forget to remember first of all the remark of Emerson, “He is great who is what he is *from nature* and who reminds us of no other man”; and then the remark of Solomon, “He hath made all things beautiful in his time.” He who wishes to be rationally original and not simply bizarre should not strive with main strength to be original but should seek to accentuate moderately his own personality and temperament. Because every man who is sufficiently a person, who has force enough to be entitled to aim to serve the world as an artist, is by nature individual and original, and if he remains true to himself his work will be sufficiently original—above all if it is truly beautiful.

To conclude, the most beneficent thing that can be vouchsafed to a man or a people is to be lifted a little, day by day, out of the mire of animality. Originality alone can not do this. Beauty alone can do it—that is, complete beauty—physical, intellectual and spiritual. Of course, mere physical beauty without spiritual content or poetic suggestion will, as we showed in last month’s magazine, lead to destruction. But mere originality devoid of lifting beauty is far more destructive because it progressively and fatally renders our life more and more a drab, emotionless bore. And the effort which we will make to escape that boredom will fatally force us to drift into individual and national excesses. Therefore the deepest truth and most beneficent message we can lay before the American public at this time is: The production of great art is dependent, not on our seeking to be original or on our being of our epoch, but on our remaining ever true to ourselves as artists while modestly and persistently seeking to create the beautiful. Above all American artists should ignore the spirit of the present epoch of Europe. They should imitate it in nothing. If they wish for models, let them go back to Italy and Greece. But, best of all, let them be true to the native idealism and genius of America!

JOHN LA FARGE

(See Frontispiece and page 209)

PROPHECIES with regard to the rise or fall in public estimation of artists of note are abundantly perilous; yet it is fairly safe to say that the reputation of John La Farge will steadily increase as time permits a closer scrutiny and more mature reckoning of his merits, as time also softens the asperities of those whom the man may have offended by acts, by speech or the printed page.

La Farge was a writer as well as craftsman; he was the foremost leader of a revival of stained glass in America from the low condition it occupies in modern Europe and he was a mural and easel painter of extraordinary merit. In some small measure he had the foible of impatience with those who could not see a point as clearly as he. Not so exuberant, not so boyish in his aversions as James M. Whistler with his amusing intolerance of the men of limited hori-

zons whom he encountered! Perhaps the breed is not so rampant and oppressive in New York and Newport, where La Farge passed the greater part of his life, as it is or was in London. Doubtless the eccentricities of La Farge found a more tolerant and sympathetic *milieu* among his own people than did the virulent Americanism of “Jimmy” Whistler among the staid and stodgy Britons. Yet there was friction here, there was friction . . . even here.

La Farge was born and brought up in New York. He had made several short trips to Europe; he had drawn on wood for engraving a number of very imaginative and original illustrations of the poems of Longfellow, Tennyson and Browning; he had studied the methods of fourteenth century makers of stained glass and had contributed wall paintings and stained glass windows of a rarely original de-

sign and coloring to churches and halls in New York, Boston, Buffalo, Newport and Cambridge. But even so, he could not be considered a success in his own country. It was necessary that foreigners should explain and expostulate and tell us that they envied us such a master! The Jury of the Paris Exposition in 1889 had before it very far from the best work by which to judge; nevertheless it reported:

"La Farge has created in all its details an art unknown before, an entirely new industry; and in a country without traditions he will begin one followed by thousands of pupils, filled with the same respect for him that we ourselves have for our own masters. To share in this respect is the highest praise we can give this great artist."

So it was that on his own stained glass, rather than his murals, La Farge received a medal and the Legion of Honor from France that year; and in 1895 he was specially invited to make a more complete exhibit.

In "Outre Mer" the French novelist and philosopher Paul Bourget alludes to La Farge during his visit to New York: "The man himself . . . who is no longer young, whose subtle face with a skin whitened and dried by inner ardor, with eyes mobile and yet held within lids both drawn and stretched, gives the impression of a nervous activity unappeased by any effort, unsatisfied through any experience, and seeking and seeking. He has practised both decoration and illustration, painting in oil and encaustic; has executed large altar-pieces such as his grand and refined 'Ascension' in an Episcopal church, as well as delicate pastels."

It is this "grand and refined" painting in the apse of the church of the Ascension on Fifth Avenue at Tenth Street, New York, which has been engraved on wood for the frontispiece by Timothy Cole. It is a painting the like of which will be vainly sought in France, Italy or England during modern times—certainly none will be found so glorious in color, so fine in composition, so imbued with the religious side of Christianity. Baudry of the Paris opera house interior may have produced more classical figures drawn with a stronger hand, but his sentiment is not of the same depth, his color is not of the same climate. Puvis de Chavannes may have excelled in long level architectural compositions replete with dignity and repose; but he never touched La Farge in color, and he lacked all feeling for the religious emotions. And yet all three were Roman Catholics! La Farge, however, grew up in the simpler air of New York and in families that took their Christianity seriously. He could accomplish what neither Baudry nor Puvis de

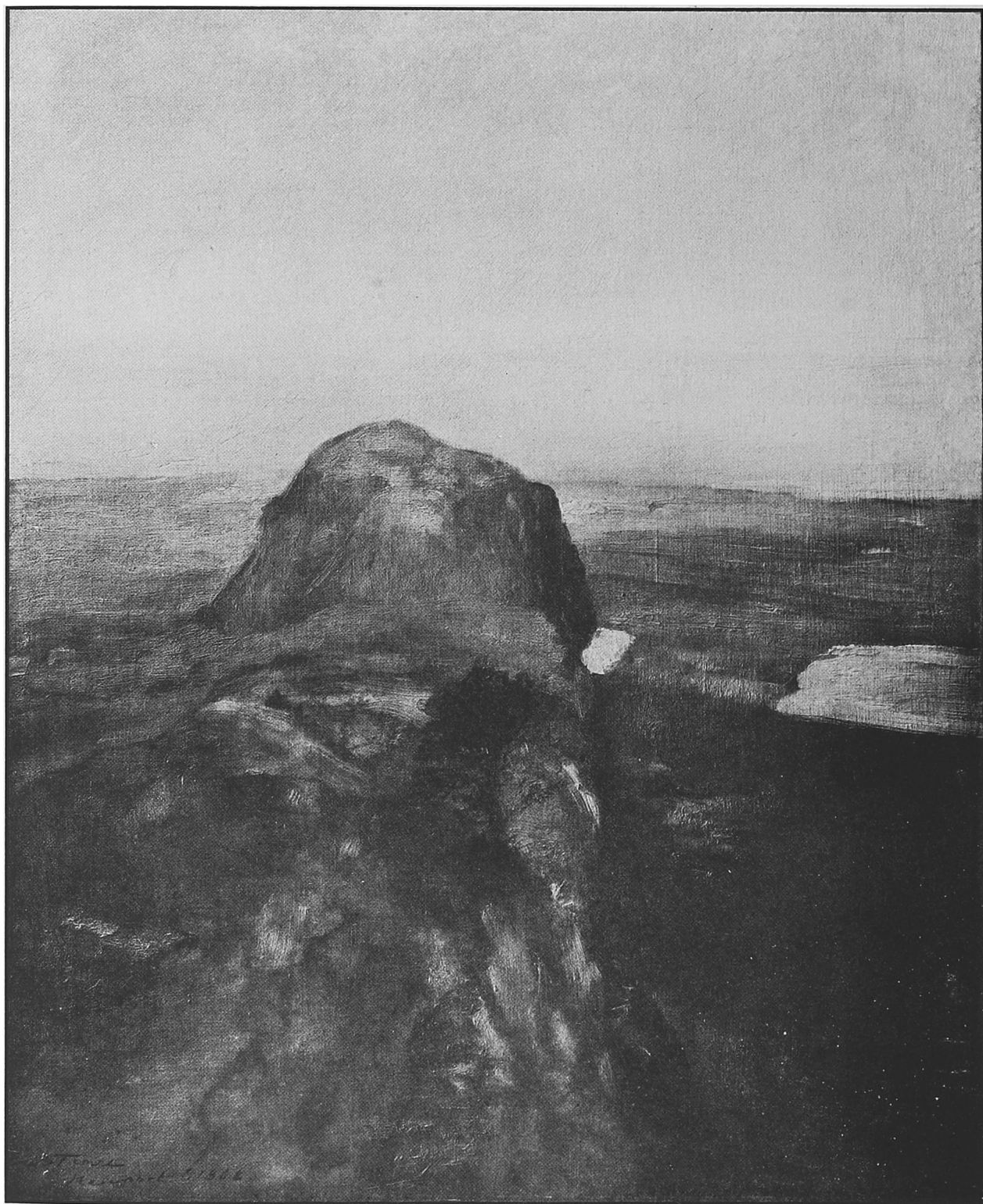
Chavannes was able to do: impress the beholder with awe by the painted scene of the Christian miracle.

Closer analogy might be found with some of the religious pictures of Théodore Chassériau (1819-1856) an original character who began under Ingres and then tried to combine the impeccable drawing of his first master with a romantic spirit and the coloring of Delacroix. If La Farge was influenced by any French artists, they were Delacroix and Chassériau, not Thomas Couture, in whose atelier he, like Courbet and Whistler, studied for a time. He also worked with Gleyre, and later coquetted with the Pre-Raphaelites; but all these influences have left small trace in his work.

La Farge was a landscapist also, and it was a sensation for New York when a large Newport landscape by him was sold for \$4,000 from an Academy exhibition in New York, a huge price for that time. The Academicians, it is true, had realized at once that in La Farge they had a better educated man than any among them, a traveled man speaking at least two languages, a man of the world. But they considered him a bit of an amateur and his first offerings were rejected or skied. He soon showed himself also a glorious and most poetic painter of flowers. But the amusing mental hierarchy in art which paralyzes many painters still, and was all-potent at that time, caused them to regard flowers good enough exercise for lady artists and amateurs! He was elected to the Academy in 1869 and died in 1910.

We have selected a Newport landscape of this period (1865-1870) for a second example, reproduced in half-tone (see page 209), because his landscapes are few in number compared to his mural paintings, glass windows and water-colors. Even as early as 1868—the date of "Bishop Berkeley's Rock, Paradise near Newport"—he already showed a wonderful ease of brush and the glorious color that we see in his windows in the church of the Ascension and the church of the Paulist Fathers, New York; in Memorial Hall, Harvard University, and Trinity Church, Buffalo, N. Y. George Berkeley, the metaphysician, friend of Jonathan Swift and later Bishop of Cloyne, came to the colonies in the earlier part of the eighteenth century on a mission to found a college for the conversion of Indians. He had a farm near Newport and used to haunt a cave on the seaward side of the knoll now called "Berkeley's Rock," which is shown in this landscape. There he read and wrote. Perhaps it was there he thought out the problems in metaphysics which have made his name conspicuous ever since in the history of philosophy. The painting reproduced held the centre of the La Farge exhibit last year at the Panama-Pacific show in San Francisco.





"BISHOP BERKELEY'S ROCK, PARADISE, NEAR NEWPORT, R. I."

BY JOHN L. A. FARGE

(See page 207)



"THE ASCENSION"